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'THE UNLEASHED THUNDERBOLTS' OF IBN QAYYIM AL-ĞAWZIYYAH: AN INTRODUCTORY ESSAY

Historically, the persona of Ibn Qayyim al-Ğawziyyah has always been eclipsed by his mentor and teacher, Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728/1328). The reasons for this are obvious, for, to a great extent, he rehashed the ideas of Ibn Taymiyyah and continued propagating his doctrines. However, it is also quite clear that he did not merely copy and paste from the works of his master, for Ibn Qayyim al-Ğawziyyah's style of writing is simpler and his method of refutation is easier to follow. This also explains why some of Ibn al-Qayyim's works are more accessible and popular today than the works of Ibn Taymiyyah. The present paper is specifically concerned with one of Ibn Qayyim al-Ğawziyyah's most significant late theological treaties, his *al-Ṣawāᶜiq al-mursalah ᶜalà l-Ğahmiyyah wa-l-Muᶜaṭṭilah (The Unleashed Thunderbolts against the Ğahmīs and Negators).*

Introduction

Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr ibn Ayyūb, commonly known as Ibn Qayyim al-Ğawziyyah, authored close to one hundred works. Unlike Ibn Taymiyyah, most of Ibn al-Qayyim's writings are tracts of moderate length.[1] However, one of the most voluminous books that Ibn Qayyim al-Ğawziyyah wrote (perhaps his largest, as the entire unedited work has not yet been discovered) is his *al-Ṣawāᶜiq al-mursalah*. The purpose of this article is to analyze the scope and content of the *al-Ṣawāᶜiq*, so it can serve as a springboard for future studies on Ibn al-Qayyim in general, and Ḥanbalī / Ašᶜarī polemics in particular.

The Name and Date of the Work

The editor of the printed edition of *al-Ṣawāᶜiq* mentions that most original manuscripts, and also the majority of later references, title the work as *al-Ṣa-*

1 – The most comprehensive study conducted on the life and works of Ibn al-Qayyim is: Bakr ibn ᶜAbd Allah Abū Zayd, *Ibn Qayyim al-Ğawziyyah: ḥayātuhu, āṯāruhā, mawāriduhu*, Riyadh, Dār al-ᶜāṣimah, 1992. In English see: Livnat Holtzman, "Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (1292-1350)", in: Joseph E. Lowry and Devin Stewart, (ed.s), *Essays in Arabic Literary Biography*, Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz Verlag, 2009, p. 202-223; Birgit Krawietz, "Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyah: His Life and Works", *Mamlūk Studies Review*, 10 (2006), 2, p. 19-64. For a hagiographic study in English, see: Ṣalāḥud-Dīn Abdul-Mawjūd, *The Biography of Imām Ibn al-Qayyim*, Abdul Rafi Adewale Imam (trans.), Riyadh, Darussalam Publications, 2006.

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wāᶜiq al-mursalah ᶜalà l-Ǧahmiyyah wa-l-Muᶜaṭṭilah, or 'The Unleashed Thunderbolts against the Ǧahmīs and Negators'. There are variant versions found, but the differences are trivial and they do not change the basic meaning of the title.[2]

Al-Ṣawāᶜiq al-mursalah is one of the most exhaustive treatises of theology that Ibn al-Qayyim authored. The existing manuscripts of this text are all incomplete and it is estimated that, put together, they form less than half of the original. An incomplete edition of the *al-Ṣawāᶜiq* (based on three relatively late manuscripts) was published in four volumes in 1988.[3] This is the only printing of the partial original work.

Al-Ṣawāᶜiq al-mursalah also exists in a summarized form, and it is this version, the *Muḫtaṣar al-Ṣawāᶜiq*, that is the most widely read edition of the work. Since this summarized edition is the only source that we have for significant portions of the *al-Ṣawāᶜiq*, it will be discussed in greater detail in the next section along with its author.

The title of the original work is provocative. It is addressed to 'Ǧahmīs' and 'Negators'. As is typical with both Ibn al-Qayyim and Ibn Taymiyyah, the 'Ǧahmīs' refer to all groups that did not affirm the literal understanding of God's attributes mentioned in the Quran, including the Muᶜtazilīs and Ašᶜarīs. This reference is further delineated by the term 'Negators', or *'al-Muᶜaṭṭilah'*, because Ibn al-Qayyim views them as having negated God's attributes. This work is meant to be a *ṣāᶜiqah*, or 'thunderbolt' that has been unleashed *(mursalah)* against them. The symbolic reference would be understood by any educated reader, for the Quran states that God is the one who 'sends out thunderbolts *(yursilu l-ṣawāᶜiqa)* in order to strike down any of His creation whom He wills' (Q. 13:13). The implication from the title is clear: Ibn al-Qayyim believes that those who dispute and negate the divine attributes of God are worthy of such divine punishment.[4]

According to the editor, *al-Ṣawāᶜiq* appears to have been written sometime during the last six years of Ibn al-Qayyim's life. The editor bases this estimate on the fact that *al-Ṣawāᶜiq* explicitly refers to another work of Ibn al-Qayyim, his *Ḥādī al-arwāḥ ilà bilād al-afrāḥ*, which was written, according to a dated colo-

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2 – *Al-Ṣawāᶜiq al-mursalah ᶜalà l-Ǧahmiyyah wa-l-Muᶜaṭṭilah*, ed. ᶜAlī ibn Muḥammad al-Daḫīl Allāh, Riyadh, Dār al-ᶜāṣimah, 1998. Henceforth *al-Ṣawāᶜiq*. See the editor's Introduction to the work, where he discusses the variant wordings of the title, *al-Ṣawāᶜiq*, p. 75-78.

3 – Edited by ᶜAlī ibn Muḥammad al-Daḫīl Allāh, Riyadh, *(op. cit.)*; this was the editor's doctoral dissertation presented to Imam University in Riyadh in the academic year 1405/06 AH (1985/86 CE). For manuscript information, see the editor's Introduction to *al-Ṣawāᶜiq*, p. 129-134.

4 – In the title of another work, Ibn al-Qayyim invokes not the wrath of God but rather the wrath of the Muslim armies. His *Iǧtimāᶜ al-ǧuyūš al-islāmiyyah ᶜalà ġazw al-Muᶜaṭṭilah wa-l-Ǧahmiyyah*, ed. ᶜAwwād ᶜAbd Allāh al-Muᶜtiq, Riyadh, Maktabat al-rušd, 1995, or *Collecting the Islamic armies to attack the Negators and Ǧahmīs*. This work is specifically meant to discuss God's physical transcendence *(ᶜuluw)* over His creation and His ascension over the Throne *(istiwāᵓ ᶜalà l-ᶜarš)*. Note the combination, once again, of Ǧahmīs and Negators in the title.

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phon of an original manuscript, in 745/1344.[5] The significance of the work increases, therefore, in light of the fact that this is one of the last theological treatises Ibn al-Qayyim wrote, in addition to being one of his most extensive.

The 'Summarized al-Ṣawā'iq'

For many years, the *Muḫtaṣar al-Ṣawā'iq* of Šams al-Dīn ibn al-Mawṣilī (d. 774/1372) was the only known version Ibn al-Qayyim's *al-Ṣawā'iq*.[6] Ibn al-Mawṣilī, whose full name is Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Karīm, was born sometime in the late seventh/thirteenth century, in Ba'labakk, Syria. He later became the preacher *(ḫaṭīb)* of the city's Grand Mosque. His skill as a preacher earned him some fame, for in Ramaḍān of 757/1356 he was called to Damascus to take the position of *ḫaṭīb* of a new mosque sponsored by the governor of the region.[7] He also taught at the Fāḍiliyyah school and earned a side-living as a book-seller, apparently with a handsome income. He wrote a few works on language, Hadith, and Šāfi'ī *fiqh*.[8]

Our sources remain silent on how Ibn al-Mawṣilī was introduced to *al-Ṣawā'iq*. It is highly improbable that he had met the author himself, as he arrived in Damascus at least five years after Ibn Qayyim al-Ǧawziyyah's death. It is probably in the course of his bookselling business that he came across *al-Ṣawā'iq* and decided to write a summary of it.

The scholarly background of Ibn al-Mawṣilī adds to the credibility of his summary. A comparison between the extant portions of the original *al-Ṣawā'iq* and its *Muḫtaṣar* show that Ibn al-Mawṣilī followed the original order of the book and was faithful in preserving the essential arguments of its author. In spite

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5 – Editor's introduction to *al-Ṣawā'if*, p. 82-83. Also see Holtzman, "Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah", p. 203, who lists this as one of the later works of Ibn al-Qayyim; and Joseph Normen Bell, *Love Theory in Later Ḥanbalite* Islam, New York, SUNY Press, 1979, p. 97-103.

6 – The *Muḫtaṣar* was first printed in Mecca in 1929 under the patronage of King 'Abd al-'Azīz of Saudi Arabia. This edition by Muḥammad Ḥāmid al-Fiqī relied on only one manuscript that had been copied in the 18th century, hence it contained many errors and omissions. All subsequent mass printings of the work relied on this edition. Recently, the work was printed in a critical edition, based on a number of medieval manuscripts, as part of a doctoral dissertation submitted to the Department of Theology at the Islamic University of Medina. It is this edition that is referenced throughout this paper, the *Muḫtaṣar al-ṣawā'iq al-mursalah 'alà l-Ǧahmiyyah wa-l-Mu'aṭṭilah*, ed. al-Ḥasan ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-'Alawī, Riyadh, Aḍwā' al-salaf, 2004; henceforth *Muḫtaṣar*.

7 – It appears that either Ibn al-Mawṣilī only gave one sermon there, or he was not able to deliver any sermon due to the intrigues of the Ḥanafī judges of the region, who believed they had more authority to appoint religious positions than the governor did. The historian Ibn Kaṯīr mentions this incident briefly, as an eyewitness, in the events of the year 757/1356. See: Ibn Kaṯīr, *al-Bidāyah wa-l-nihāyah fī l-ta'rīḫ*, ed. 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Lādatī, Beirut, Dār al-ma'rifah, 1997, vol. 14, p. 682-683.

8 – For his biography, see: Ibn Ḥağar, *al-Durar al-kāminah fī a'yān al-mi'ah al-ṯāminah*, Beirut, n.d., vol. 4, p. 266; Ḫayr al-Dīn al-Ziriklī, *al-A'lām – Qāmūs tarāǧim li-ašhur al-riǧāl wa-l-nisā' min al-'arab wa-l-musta'ribin wa-l-mustašriqin*, Beirut, Dār al-'ilm li-l-malāyīn, 1992, vol. 7, p. 39-40.

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of this, Ibn al-Mawṣilī occasionally expunged the text of some of Ibn al-Qayyim's crucial passages. Additionally, he did not write a detailed introduction to his summary which would have outlined his methodology. In the first paragraph, Ibn al-Mawṣilī merely pointed out that his work is a "... hastily written selection taken from *al-Ṣawāʿiq al-mursalah*".[9]

Primarily, Ibn al-Mawṣilī deleted some of Ibn al-Qayyim's original specific arguments. For example, in the original version of *al-Ṣawāʿiq*, Ibn al-Qayyim mentions at least 144 proofs to refute the principle that reason takes precedence over revelation when a conflict exists between the two;[10] Ibn al-Mawṣilī only mentioned 52 of these arguments.[11] Ibn al-Mawṣilī also deleted many of Ibn al-Qayyim's tangential topics. For example, in the context of discussing why variant interpretations of the same text exist, Ibn al-Qayyim delves into a lenghty analysis of the causes of differences between jurists. Examples of this analysis include the jurist not being aware of specific evidence pertaining to the issue at stake, considering an inauthentic tradition to be authentic, or interpreting an ambiguous word in a specific manner. To clarify his point, Ibn al-Qayyim mentions specific questionable legal practices pertaining to the procedure of divorce.[12] This entire section, which consists of more than one hundred pages in the modern printed edition, was completely deleted by Ibn al-Mawṣilī.[13]

On occasion, such deletions are extremely harmful to our understanding of the text. For example, in the original *al-Ṣawāʿiq*, after the introduction, Ibn al-Qayyim mentions the four principles upon which the 'Negators' based their theology.[14] *Al-Ṣawāʿiq* is written to refute these very principles, hence this is a crucial passage, yet Ibn al-Mawṣilī's summarized version does not mention it.

The editors of the original (albeit incomplete) version of *al-Ṣawāʿiq* estimate that Ibn al-Mawṣilī succeeded in halving the size of the original work.[15] They base their estimation on a comparison between the extant portion of al-*Ṣawāʿiq* and the *Muḫtasar*. It is then to the *Muḫtasar* that we must turn for the summarized contents of this latter half.

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9 – *Muḫtasar*, vol. 1, p. 3.

10 – *Al-Ṣawāʿiq*, vol. 3, p. 797 to vol. 4, p. 1536.

11 – *Muḫtasar*, vol. 1, p. 247 to vol. 2, p. 544.

12 – Ibn al-Qayyim mentions two examples which demonstrate his position: a vow that threatened divorce is invalid, and a simultaneous triple pronouncement of divorce should be counted as a single divorce. Both positions were held by Ibn Taymiyyah before him. On account of these positions, Ibn Taymiyyah was criticized or jailed. See: Abdul Hakim I. Al-Matroudi, *The Ḥanbali School of Law and Ibn Taymiyyah*, New York, Routledge, 2006, p. 20; 172-186; Yossef Rapoport, "Ibn Taymiyya on Divorce Oaths", in Amalia Levanoni and Michael Winter (ed.s.), *The Mamluks in Egyptian and Syrian Politics and Society*, Leiden, Brill, 2004, p. 191-217.

13 – *Al-Ṣawāʿiq*, vol. 1, p. 514-632.

14 – *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 632.

15 – Editor's Introduction to *al-Ṣawāʿiq*, vol. 1, p. 124.

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The Contents of al-Ṣawāʿiq*: an Overview*

The work begins with a brief introduction outlining the centrality of the knowledge of God in the teachings of all the prophets – God sends prophets, and in particular the Prophet Muḥammad, in order that man recognize Him and know His attributes. How can anyone with an ounce of intellect, Ibn al-Qayyim argues, claim that the Prophet taught mankind the most mundane of all human matters (such as the etiquettes of sexual intimacy and relieving oneself), and yet did not inform them regarding what is infinitely more important than that (such as the correct understanding of the divine attributes), or spoke about such an important topic in a manner that did not do justice to it?[16]

After asking this rhetorical question, he then quotes a lengthy passage from one of Ibn Taymiyyah's writings,[17] in which Ibn Taymiyyah states that the primary error of all of the groups of Kalām and Falsafah is their belief that the earliest generations of Muslims merely parroted the Quran and Hadith without fully understanding the texts. Ibn Taymiyyah argues that these groups incorrectly assumed that it was their job to extract the true meanings of these Scriptural references, which they did by means of complicated linguistic feats. The primary linguistic tool that the people of Kalām and Falsafah used, according to Ibn Taymiyyah, is that of *taʾwīl*, or 'reinterpretation'. With this quote from his teacher, Ibn al-Qayyim then turns his attention to clarifying the reality of *taʾwīl* and dedicates twenty-four chapters to this subject.[18]

In these chapters, Ibn al-Qayyim defines *taʾwīl* both linguistically and technically, and states that the usage of the word as understood by the earliest generations (the Salaf) was different from its understanding and usage by later Mutakallimūn. According to Ibn al-Qayyim, the earliest generations used this term to denote the actuality, implementation or end-result of a word, and this understanding conforms with its linguistic origin, for the root *āl* signifies 'returning to'.[19] The usage of later Mutakallimūn, which denotes reinterpreting the obvious meaning of a word in light of an obscure or unprecedented meaning, was not known to the earliest generations, and does not conform to the linguistic meaning of the term. Therefore, Ibn al-Qayyim asserts, to presume that reinterpretation (*taʾwīl* in its Kalāmic usage) is required of a particular word is actually presuming that one knows the precise intent of the speaker.[20] It is also logical to assume, Ibn al-Qayyim proceeds, that requiring *taʾwīl* of a phrase necessitates one of three charges: that the one speaking was not sincere in speaking with the

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16 – *Al-Ṣawāʿiq*, vol. 1, p. 160; *Muḫtaṣar*, vol. 1, p. 11-13.

17 – *The Epistle to the People of Ḥamāh* or *al-Ḥamawiyyah al-kubrà*, in: *Maǧmūʿ fatāwà šayḫ al-islām Aḥmad ibn Taymiyyah*, ed. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad ibn Qāsim and Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad, Cairo, Dār al-raḥmah, [1980-], reprinted Riyadh, no editor mentioned, 1997, vol. 5, p. 9-11.

18 – *Al-Ṣawāʿiq*, vol. 1, p. 175 to vol. 2, p. 632.

19 – *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 183-186.

20 – *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 202-204.

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clearest possible meanings,[21] or was not knowledgeable of what he was saying,[22] or was not capable of speaking with the most precise wordings.[23] Otherwise, states Ibn al-Qayyim, if the speaker is sincere, knowledgeable, and eloquent, it would make no logical sense to try and presume another interpretation of the speech in the first place. And of course, God must be sincere in His desire to guide, and knows what He is saying, and is the most eloquent in speech.

In fact, argues Ibn al-Qayyim, the use of *taʾwīl* destroys the very function and purpose of language itself, for God taught men how to speak in order to express their thoughts and beliefs, "... so if a listener presumes that words carry meanings other than what they are used for, and in contrast to what is typically understood from them, this destroys the very purpose of language".[24]

This, and other criticisms, form the beginning sections of *al-Ṣawāʿiq*, but Ibn al-Qayyim only intends this to serve as a prelude to the core of the work, which is the refutation of the 'four pillars of falsehood' *(ṭawāġīt)* upon which the Mutakallimūn base the validity of resorting to *taʾwīl*.

The four ṭawāġīt

In the twenty-fourth and final introductory section on *taʾwīl*, Ibn al-Qayyim mentions what he believes are the four primary pillars of falsehood (*ṭāġūt*, pl. *ṭawāġīt*) that the people of *taʾwīl* used in order to destroy the foundation of religion and diminish the sanctity of the Quran.[25] The rest of the work is, then, dedicated to refuting these four pillars.

As mentioned earlier, in his *Muḥtaṣar* Ibn al-Mawṣilī apparently did not deem this crucial section worthy of keeping, so he deleted it. This decision was unfortunate, because, without this section, the arrangement of the work and the issues involved in it are not properly explained. Surprisingly, Ibn al-Mawṣilī mentions each of the four *ṭawāġīt* individually later on in his summary, as they are refuted one by one, but apparently forgets to insert an introductory remark laying out all of these *ṭawāġīt* at the beginning of his abridgement.

Ibn al-Qayyim's use of the word *ṭāġūt* is noteworthy. His readers would already be familiar with this Quranic term, for the Quran commands believers to "... reject *ṭaġūt* and believe in God" (2:256). Although this term has been commonly understood by Western translators as being a reference to idols or false gods, Ibn al-Qayyim did not understand it in such a restricted sense. He discusses this word in detail in his *Iʿlām al-muwaqqiʿīn ʿan rabb al-ʿālamīn*, where he defines it as whatever causes someone to go beyond the legal bounds, such as an idol or a misguiding leader. He explains:

> So the *ṭāġūt* of every people is that which they judge by other than

21 – *Al-Ṣawāʿiq*, vol. 1, p. 310.

22 – *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 324.

23 – *Ibid.*

24 – *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 345.

25 – *Ibid.*, vol 2, p. 632.

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> God and His Messenger, or whom they worship besides God, or whom they follow without knowledge from God.[26]

Therefore, in the terminology of Ibn al-Qayyim these four 'pillars' that he is about to refute are rules derived from ungodly sources, without guidance from God, in order to pervert God's texts and thereby mislead man.

Ibn Qayyim al-Ğawziyyah appears to have based this definition on the elaborations of his teacher, Ibn Taymiyyah. Ibn Taymiyyah, after mentioning key verses from the Quran that mention the term *ṭāġūt*, writes that from these verses, one can define a *ṭāġūt* as any person who is either worshipped besides God and approves of that worship, or wishes to rule in contradiction to the Laws of God.[27]

The first of these four *ṭawāġīt* is the claim that the words of God and His Messenger do not impart certain knowledge *(yaqīn)* The second *ṭaġūt* deals with the concept of metaphor, or *maǧāz*, and its existence and use in understanding the references to God's attributes. The third *ṭaġūt* claims that even if prophetic traditions were reported by authentic chains of transmission, these traditions do not necessarily convey certain knowledge *(ʿilm)*, but rather possible knowledge *(ẓann)*. And the last *ṭaġūt* is the claim that when there is a conflict between reason *(ʿaql)* and revelation *(naql)*, precedence must be given to reason over revelation. Ibn al-Qayyim writes that these four *taġūt*s:[28]

> have caused the damage that they have inflicted to Islam, and erased its very remains, and removed the awe that the Scripture had in the hearts [of the believers] ... so much so that any time an evidence is quoted from the Book of God or the Sunna of His Messenger, all that an opponent needs do is to turn to one of these four *ṭawāġīt* and seek refuge in it. But God, through the inheritors of the prophets and the deputies of the messengers [i.e. the religious scholars], has long refuted these *ṭawāġīt*, and this is what we plan to do as well, one *ṭāġūt* at a time.

It is crucial that one understands how Ibn al-Qayyim viewed these four *ṭawāġīt* and what they represent. In essence, these four *ṭawāġīt* are principles or dialectic methods commonly employed by Kalām theologians in order to explain how specific textual references to the divine apparently seemed to be at dissonance with Kalām theology. The first and the third of these *ṭawāġīt* are very similar: whereas the first describes the role and nature of speech (for the Mutakallimūn, speech *qua* speech does not yield certain knowledge, in contrast to, say, a valid syllogism), the third rule describes the acceptance of a certain type of speech (*viz.*, prophetic traditions). Both of these rules can be invoked against the use of the 'literal' wordings of a Quranic passage or prophetic traditions (one that, for

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26 – Ibn al-Qayyim, *Iʿlām al-muwaqqiʿīn ʿan rabb al-ʿālamīn*, ed. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Wakīl, Beirut, Dār iḥyāʾ al-turāṯ al-ʿarabī, n.d., vol. 1, p. 53.

27 – Ibn Taymiyyah, *Maǧmūʿ al-fatāwà*, vol. 28, p. 201.

28 – *Al-Ṣawāʿiq*, vol. 2, p. 632-633.

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example, mentions God as being 'above' His creation). The second of these *ṭawāġīt* also deals with language, and can be seen as an extension of the first: it can be argued, the *mutakallim* would say, that because language allows for multiple interpretations, through allegory or other linguistic devices, the use of a specific word does not necessarily imply a certain knowledge of one of its connotations. The last of these *ṭawāġīt* attempts to set up a working relationship between 'reason' *(ʿaql)* and 'revelation' *(naql)*, and trumps reason over revelation when a clash is posited.

We shall now summarize Ibn al-Qayyim's rebuttal of these four tools.[29]

The First Ṭāġūt

The first of the rules of the Mutakallimūn that Ibn al-Qayyim addresses is the claim that the texts of the revelation are verbal evidence *(adillah lafẓiyyah)* that do not yield certain knowledge. Without mentioning Faḫr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210) by name, Ibn al-Qayyim quotes his claim that a textual proof can only be accepted as certain knowledge after ten conditions have been met.[30] These conditions include the knowledge that each and every transmitter in the chain *(rāwī)* is not prone to error or mistake, that the wording does not contain any ambiguities, that there is no metaphorical language or hidden actors involved in the speech, that there is no specification of meaning or time or place, and other factors.

To refute this claim, Ibn al-Qayyim raises precisely 73 arguments.[31] Among these is the role of language itself, for Scriptural references are but one manifestation of the use of words and expressions, and if the Scripture itself cannot yield certain knowledge then *ipso facto* the words of men should not be able to yield such knowledge. Yet, Ibn al-Qayyim argues, this is clearly not the case, for if words did not carry certain meanings, life itself would become impossible, the speech of one individual to another would not be understood, students could claim that they did not understand their teacher's intent, and children would not learn their native language.[32] All of this, he argues, is contrary to the experi-

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29 – Note that while Ibn al-Qayyim lists the four *ṭawāġīt* in this introductory paragraph in one order, in the actual work he tackles them in a different order, refuting the last one in second place (i.e., 1, then 4, then 2, then 3, according to the numbering of this paragraph). In this paper, we remain faithful to Ibn al-Qayyim's order in his work and ignore the order in the introductory paragraph.

30 – See: Faḫr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Kitāb muḥaṣṣal afkār al-mutaqaddimīn wa-l-mutaʾaḫḫirīn*, ed. Ḥusayn Atay, Cairo, Maktabat dār al-turāṯ, 1991, p. 143.

31 – *Al-Ṣawāʿiq*, vol. 2, p. 633-794. The *Muḫtaṣar* seems disoriented at this point, for neither are the four 'principles' referenced, nor is the first one even stated explicitly anywhere. Hence, while reading the *Muḫtaṣar*, one might well conclude that the Introduction regarding *taʾwīl* is still continuing up until the beginning of the refutation of the second *ṭāġūt*. It is very possible that there is a missing section from the *Muḫtaṣar* (this is the opinion of the editor), or else Ibn al-Mawṣilī did not act judiciously in the summary of this part; see *Muḫtaṣar*, vol. 1, p. 210-245.

32 – *Al-Ṣawāʿiq*, vol. 2, p. 645-646.

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ences of the world around us. In addition, the claim that any statement requires ten specific conditions to be met before it yields certain knowledge is itself in need of proof. Moreover, most of mankind clearly understands such speech (for example, the meanings of the names of God, such as 'The Merciful' and 'The King') despite their ignorance of these conditions![33] To buttress their point, Ibn al-Qayyim argues, this group (*viz.*, the Aš^{c}arīs) claims that even the proper name of God, Allāh, is subject to great controversy amongst linguists regarding its linguistic origin and grammatical status: a proper noun or a derived name. Thus, argues the Aš^{c}arīs, if even the divine Name of God is subject to so much controversy, what then of words lesser than it in nobility? Ibn al-Qayyim is not persuaded by this line of reasoning, and instead attacks the Aš^{c}arīs for what he views as a false and deceitful tactic. Even if semantic differences regarding the linguistic origin of the name Allāh exist, there is absolutely no difference at all regarding what this proper name refers to, *viz.*, the One and True Creator.[34] And does not God Himself, Ibn al-Qayyim adds, ask man to ponder and contemplate His Book? Had it been so bereft of value and certainty, why issue such a command in the first place?[35]

The Second Ṭāġūt

After refuting the first interpretive rule, Ibn al-Qayyim turns himself to the second *ṭāġūt* which states that intellectual evidences takes priority over textual proofs in cases of conflict.[36]

In this section, Ibn al-Qayyim begins by stating that Ibn Taymiyyah wrote a ten-volume work entitled *Dar' ta^{c}āruḍ al-^{c}aql wa-l-naql (Averting the Conflict of Reason with Revelation)*.[37] Ibn al-Qayyim claims that his master's work cannot be surpassed regarding this specific topic, and that his entire argument will merely be drops from that ocean.[38] Ibn Taymiyyah wrote *Dar' ta^{c}āruḍ* around 715/1315 in order to refute al-Rāzī's 'Universal Principle' *(al-qānūn al-kullī)* as outlined in his work entitled *Ta'sīs al-taqdīs (The Establishment of the Sacred)*. This 'Universal Principle' states that when a conflict occurs between reason *(^{c}aql)* and revelation *(naql)*, priority must be given to reason over revelation.

For Ibn Taymiyyah, this 'Universal Principle' was an overarching rule from which all of the groups that opposed 'orthodoxy' drew their theological, ethical and even socio-political views. Ibn Taymiyyah felt that by attacking this funda-

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33 – *Al-Ṣawā^{c}iq*, vol. 2, p. 681.

34 – *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 750.

35 – *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 792.

36 – The printed version of the *Ṣawā^{c}iq* only goes as far as the two hundred and forty first argument in refutation of the *ṭāġūt*; this discussion takes up the entire third and fourth volume of the edition. The *Muḫtaṣar* mentions forty-seven arguments, neatly summarized from vol. 1, p. 247 to vol. 2, p. 689.

37 – The standard printing of the *Dar' ta^{c}āruḍ al-^{c}aql wa-l-naql bi-l-naql* is the one edited by Muḥammad Rašād Sālim, 11vols., Riyadh, Dār al-kunūz al-adabiyyah, 1979.

38 – *Al-Ṣawā^{c}iq*, vol. 2, p. 797.

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mental premise, he would be able to systematically destroy the very pillar upon which the entire science of Kalām was built. Thus, in the *Dar'*, Ibn Taymiyyah outlined forty-four specific arguments that sought to denude the 'Universal Principle' of any merit. Some of these arguments take up entire volumes, whereas others are explained in a few paragraphs.

As Ibn al-Qayyim himself mentions, his entire critique is in fact drawn from the *Dar'*, albeit re-worded and simplified.

An extremely brief view of the overall critique of Ibn Taymiyyah (and hence Ibn al-Qayyim) can be constructed as follows:[39] since both reason and revelation are from God (the one created and the other eternal), it is impossible that the two ever be in actual conflict. In fact, true reason *(al-ʿaql al-ṣaḥīḥ)* agrees with and supports explicit revelation *(al-naql al-ṣarīḥ)*. This is not to suggest that reason always yields the same results as Scripture, but rather that reason can never contradict Scripture. While it is true that Scripture can bring forth that which *astounds* the intellect, Scripture can never come forth with that which *opposes* the intellect. One of the greatest mistakes of the Falāsifah and the Mutakallimūn is that they failed to comprehend both the role of reason and the meaning of Scripture, which led them to posit a conflict between the two when no such conflict actually existed. Many times, they conflated Aristotelian philosophy and Neo-Platonic beliefs with pure reason *(ʿaql)*, even though pure reason itself, if properly applied, can show the fallacies of these beliefs. In fact, the commonsense that prevails in average people is more representative of pure reason than the construed and extremely complicated philosophical arguments of the Mutakallimūn.

It is at this point that the manuscripts of the original *al-Ṣawāʿiq* finish; for the remaining sections of this work we must then rely completely on Ibn al-Mawṣilī's *Muḫtaṣar*.

After refuting this second *ṭāġūt*, Ibn al-Qayyim delves into a tangential topic regarding one of his most controversial positions: the non-eternality of Hell. Arguing from over twenty textual and rational perspectives, Ibn al-Qayyim states that it serves God no purpose to eternally punish a temporal creation who could not possibly warrant such a long punishment.[40]

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39 – For a brief overview of Ibn Taymiyya's arguments, see: Binyamin Abrahamov, "Ibn Taymiyya on the Agreement of Reason with Tradition", *The Muslim World*, 82 (1992), 3-4 , p. 256-273; Nicholas Heer, "The Priority of Reason in the Interpretation of the Scripture: Ibn Taymiyah and the *Mutakallimūn*" in: Mustansir Mir (ed.), *Literary Heritage of Classical Islam: Arabic and Islamic Studies in Honor of James A. Bellamy*, Princeton, NJ, Darwin Press, 1993, p. 181-195; Yahya Michot, "Vanités intellectuelles ... L'impasse des rationalismes selon le 'Rejet de la Contradiction' d'Ibn Taymiyyah," *Oriente Moderno*, 80 (2000) 3, p. 597-617; Id., "A Mamluk Theologian's Commentary on Avicenna's *Risala Aḍḥawiyya*: Being a Translation of a Part of the *Dar' al-taʿārud* of Ibn Taymiyya with Introduction, Annotation, and Appendices" Part I, *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 14 (2003) 2, p. 149-203 and Part II, *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 14 (2003) 3, p. 309-363; Mohammad Hassan Khalil, "Ibn Taymiyya on Reason and Revelation in Ethics", *Journal of Islamic Philosophy*, 2 (2006), p. 103-132.

40 – For the entire argument, refer to *Muḫtaṣar*, vol. 3, p. 637-685. Of course, in all likelihood there were more arguments in the original *al-Ṣawāʿiq*. It is a pity that we do not have ac-

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The Third Ṭāġūt

The third rule that Ibn al-Qayyim deals with is the Aš^{c}arī use of the concept of *maǧāz*, or allegory. Ibn al-Qayyim, like his mentor Ibn Taymiyyah, is highly critical of the entire concept of *maǧāz*, in particular when it is employed by the Mutakallimūn to reinterpret God's divine attributes.[41] This is illustrated in great detail in order to show the fallacy of this concept – over half of the entire *Muḫtaṣar* is, in fact, dedicated to refuting the very existence of *maǧāz*.[42] This section is the single most detailed critique of *maǧāz* that we have in any of Ibn Qayyim al-Ǧawziyyah's works.

Ibn al-Qayyim begins his critique by stating that the very notion of dividing the Arabic language into categories such as *ḥaqīqī* and *maǧāzī* has no rational, religious, linguistic or utilitarian basis. Furthermore, no such classification is found in the works of the primary architects of Arabic grammar, such as al-Ḫalīl (d. 173/789), Sībawayh (d. 180/796), al-Farrā' (d. 207/822) and others. Rather, this division was itself a late invention, and there is no unanimity amongst scholars of the language regarding its validity.[43] After criticizing such a division, he then proceeds to refute the validity of *maǧāz* from fifty perspectives, specifically challenging definitions and conditions that grammarians placed on the occurrence of *maǧāz*.[44] He finds ludicrous the claim that a word is not to be understood at face value due to a contextual indication. When someone says, 'Zayd is a lion' *(Zayd asad)*, intending he was a brave person, who in his right mind would understand anything from this sentence *except* that Zayd was a brave person? Hence, in this sentence, the word 'lion' *(asad)* in and of itself, without the need to resort to *maǧāz*, signifies bravery at face value. Furthermore, he adds, is not language itself a gift that God has taught man (as per Quran 55:1-4), hence these words were meant to indicate what God Himself wished them to indicate?[45] And why is it, he continues, that those who affirm *maǧāz* cannot seem to agree on its precise definition and necessary conditions?[46]

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cess to it, especially for this crucial theological issue. The non eternality of Hell fire is dealt with in detail in: Jon Hoover, "Islamic Universalism: Ibn Qayyim al-Ǧawziyyah's Salafi Deliberations on the Duration of Hell-Fire", *The Muslim World*, 99 (2009), p. 181-201 and Muhammad Hassan Khalil, "Muslim Scholarly Discussions on Salvation and the Fate of Others", unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 2007.

41 – For a discussion on *maǧāz*, see: Wolfhart Heinrichs, "On the Genesis of the Haqīqa-Maǧāz Dichotomy", *Studia Islamica*, 59 (1984), p. 111-140 and *s.v.* «Maḏjāz» (B. Reinert), in: *EI*^{2}.

42 – Once again, we must rely completely on Ibn al-Mawṣilī's *Muḫtaṣar* for this section; we must assume, and evidence as of yet does not suggest otherwise, that Ibn al-Mawṣilī was faithful to the main premises of Ibn al-Qayyim.

43 – *Muḫtaṣar*, vol. 2, p. 692-711.

44 – Or, to be more precise, Ibn al-Mawṣilī only records fifty of Ibn al-Qayyim's arguments. If we are to draw parallels from the first two arguments, we can assume that the total number of arguments in the original work would be two or three times this number.

45 – *Muḫtaṣar*, vol. 2, p. 760.

46 – *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 790.

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After discussing the theoretical impossibility of the existence of *maǧāz*, Ibn al-Qayyim then proceeds to illustrate how specific divine attributes that have been understood as being *maǧāz* by the Mutakallimūn cannot actually be metaphorical. For each of these attributes,[47] he quotes both Quran and Hadith copiously, and also supports a literal understanding of the attributes by bringing quotes from earlier scholars, in particular those of the first centuries of Islam (the Salaf). He also points out that Aš'arī interpretations are no different than earlier Mu'tazilī or Ǧahmī ones.

To illustrate aspects of his methodology, Ibn al-Qayyim criticizes the Aš'arī understanding that God is not transcendent above His creation, and that all such references are to be understood allegorically. Ibn al-Qayyim states that there is no textual indication whatsoever that would lend support for the belief that these references should not be understood at face value, and that, instead, they should be interpreted metaphorically that God is 'above' men in power or rank, but not in His essence.[48] In fact, to merely suggest such an interpretation is demeaning to the exalted nature of God, for such comparisons are only given where the similarities are close enough to warrant such language. One would not use this word, for example, to say that 'Jewels are more precious [*viz. fawq*] than onion skins,' for that would diminish the value of jewels. Yet the disparity between the exalted nature of God and man is even greater than that.[49] In addition, there are numerous references within the Quran and the Hadith that clearly suggest that what God intended was that His essence itself was above the creation.[50] This has been the uninterrupted understanding of the Companions of the Prophet themselves[51] and the generations after them.[52] In fact, even the eponymous founder of the primary school of Kalām, al-Aš'arī himself, affirmed that God was physically above the Throne.[53]

In this method, Ibn Qayyim al-Ǧawziyyah closely follows that of his mentor Ibn Taymiyyah. Ibn al-Qayyim first shows his mastery of the Scriptural references, and then supports his understanding of them by showing his conformity to the classical *Ahl al-ḥadīṯ* tradition. In doing so, Ibn al-Qayyim wishes to discredit Aš'arī claims of 'orthodoxy'. According to Ibn al-Qayyim, true orthodoxy results by following the classical tradition, as embodied in the views of the earliest generations. And by continually quoting the positions of the Mu'tazilīs and

47 – He discusses ten attributes that the Aš'arīs have understood as *maǧāz* which the Ḥanbalīs affirmed at the literal, face value. These are: God's mercy *(raḥmah)*; His sitting on the Throne *(istiwā')*; His hand *(yad)*; His face *(waǧh)*; His Divine Light *(nūr)*; His transcendency *(fawqiyyah)*; His descending *(nuzūl)*; His being with His creation *(ma'iyyah)*; His proximity to His servants *(qurb)* and His Divine speech *(kalām)*. See: *Muḫtaṣar*, vol. 3, p. 856 - vol. 4, p. 1400.

48 – *Muḫtaṣar*, vol. 3, p. 1061.

49 – *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 1062.

50 – *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 1063-1072.

51 – *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 1071-1073.

52 – *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 1074-1092.

53 – *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 1093.

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Ǧahmīs, Ibn al-Qayyim stresses the influence that these 'unorthodox' groups had on the Aš'arīs. This flies in the face of Aš'arī 'orthodoxy', since the very *raison d'être* of the group was to challenge the claims of the Mu'tazilīs and Ǧahmīs. Ibn al-Qayyim was also aided by the fact that there was a clear evolution of ideas in the Aš'arī school itself, for the earlier Aš'arīs affirmed God's transcendence, whereas later authorities interpreted it metaphorically. By quoting such authorities, Ibn Qayyim al-Ǧawziyyah stresses the evolutionary nature of dialectic theology, and brings into question the lack of uniformity within the Aš'arī school.

The Fourth Ṭāġūt

The last of the four *ṭawāġīt* that Ibn al-Qayyim discusses is the claim that the traditions of the Prophet, and in particular those narrated with solitary chains of narration, cannot yield certainty *(yaqīn)*. Ibn al-Qayyim explains that this *ṭāġūt* is in fact a corollary to the first one (*viz.*, that Scriptural references do not yield certainty). In Ibn al-Qayyim's view, whereas the first rule claims that even *mutawātir* transmissions cannot yield full certainty (since words in and of themselves do not provide unequivocal knowledge), this last *ṭāġūt* allows the Aš'arīs to dismiss 'singular' *(āḥād)* transmissions as well. Thus, the net result of these two rules "... was to allow the hearts to be blocked off from the knowledge of God, His names, attributes and actions, [knowledge] which came from the prophets, and instead to turn men to false principles and imaginary premises which they called indubitable, rational proofs".[54]

Ibn Qayyim al-Ǧawziyyah mentions ten points in order to refute this principle.[55] Of these points is that these solitary traditions *(aḫbār āḥād)* confirm and explain the generalities that are found in the Quran. Putting all of these traditions together, he says, a clearer picture is formed, and specific details added to Quranic references of God's attributes. Consequently, it has been the custom of the scholars of the past to quote a verse and then follow it up with traditions that explain it. And surely, Ibn al-Qayyim argues, this makes more sense, and is safer to one's faith, and is more in accordance with the belief in God and His prophets, than seeking to interpret the Quran with the words of the Ǧahmīs and Mu'tazilīs, and the stanzas of poets and the obscure interpretations of linguists.[56] In fact, he claims, accepting an authentic report, even if it be solitary, was the standard practice of all of the reputable scholars of the Sunni tradition.[57]

Ibn al-Qayyim then addresses the very problematic issue of whether such reports actually yield certain knowledge *(yaqīn)* or not. He begins by classifying them into four categories: *mutawātir* in wording *(lafẓī)* and meaning *(ma'nawi)*; *mutawātir* in meaning if not in wording; well-known *(mašhūr)* narrations that

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54 – *Muḫtaṣar*, vol. 4, p. 1401.

55 – *Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 1402. Once again, what we have is Ibn al-Mawṣilī's condensed summary of the original. It is realistic to assume that Ibn al-Qayyim mentioned closer to double this amount.

56 – *Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 1403-1410.

57 – *Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 1425-1458; he quotes over fifteen examples to illustrate this point.

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have been accepted by the Ummah; and *āḥād* narrations that have been narrated with trustworthy transmitters. For Ibn al-Qayyim, the first three categories clearly impart certain knowledge, but the last category requires external evidence to fully substantiate it.[58] However, the fact that reputable Companions of the Prophet transmitted it constitutes, in and of itself, a proof of its credibility. Ibn al-Qayyim argues that no scholar from the first few generations questioned or challenged the solitary narrations of the Companions. He finds that these early followers accepted such narrations as carrying enough legal weight to act upon and believe in, even if certain knowledge was not reached.[59]

Furthermore, he points out that there are quite a few Quranic references and Hadith texts to support the claim that solitary narrations from trustworthy sources should be acted upon. For example, the command to change the prayer directions from Jerusalem to Mecca was conveyed by one person to a large congregation during the life of the Prophet, and that congregation immediately acted upon it and changed their directions during the prayer itself, thus showing that the testimony of a reliable narrator is acted upon.[60] Hence, Ibn al-Qayyim concludes, even if certain knowledge is not attained, it does yield sufficient credibility to take on legislative and theological significance in the religion. In all cases, Ibn al-Qayyim states, such prophetic traditions are surely worthier to be followed, and more acceptable as evidence, than the philosophical presumptions taken as undisputed truths by the scholars of Kalām.

In all of these views, Ibn al-Qayyim once again is explaining and elaborating the doctrines of his mentor Ibn Taymiyyah. Ibn Taymiyyah too believed that solitary narrations do not necessarily yield certain knowledge, but may do so if supporting evidence exists. One such supporting evidence, according to Ibn Taymiyyah, is the fact that such traditions have been accepted and narrated by the majority of Muslims.[61]

Conclusion

Ibn Qayyim al-Ğawziyyah's *al-Ṣawāᶜiq al-mursalah* represents one of the most sophisticated critiques of Aš'arī doctrines ever written. In this work, instead of writing a polemic directed at specific theological positions, Ibn al-Qayyim attacks the foundational premises of those positions, and concentrates on the methodological tools, or *ṭawāġīt*, that allowed the Aš'arīs to nonchalantly disregard explicit Scripture in favor of rational arguments. The sophisticated arguments and elaborate methods by which he attempts to destroy these premises show Ibn al-Qayyim's solid grasp of the positions and foundations of his opponents, his own intellectual acumen and his command over Scriptural references and rationalist methods.

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58 – *Muḫtaṣar*, vol. 4, p. 1459-1465.

59 – *Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 1485-1490.

60 – *Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 1534. He then proceeds to quote a further twenty examples, p. 1534-1458.

61 – See Ibn Taymiyyah's views in *Maǧmūᶜ al-fatāwà*, vol. 13, p. 351-352.

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As we continue to explore the thought of Ibn Qayyim al-Ǧawziyyah and his mentor Ibn Taymiyyah, we must repeatedly reassess our previous stereotypes of these two scholars. Both men have largely been portrayed as being nothing more than literalists who offered no more than a cursory, shallow explanation of Scripture. This overview of the contents of *al-Ṣawāʿiq al-mursalah* suggests that, far from this description, their methods and techniques are just as developed and principled as those of their opponents, if not more so. This work also demonstrates that while it is true that Ibn Qayyim al-Ǧawziyyah took many of the ideas of his teacher Ibn Taymiyyah, he did not merely copy and paste passages from his teacher's work. Rather, his own unique personality and insight clearly stand out. For too long, Ibn al-Qayyim has been eclipsed by his mentor Ibn Taymiyyah, but a closer reading of *al-Ṣawāʿiq al-mursalah* demonstrates that he is just as worthy of independent study as his teacher is.

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